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OFFICE OF
NATIONAL ESTIMATES

MEMORANDUM

Some Thoughts About Southern Africa

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13 February 1970

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

13 February 1970

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Some Thoughts about Southern Africa*

1. Southern Africa, though a perennial international issue, is not in itself a particularly complicated case. White minorities in South Africa, Rhodesia, South West Africa, Angola and Mozambique practice racial discrimination to preserve their monopoly of economic and political power. Independent black Africans consider this an affront to human dignity and feel obliged to do something to relieve the oppression of their fellow blacks. Most of the Asian, Arab, and Latin American states are sensitive to the continued white domination of non-whites in southern Africa. The Communist countries, which have no interests in the white-ruled states, find the southern African issue a safe and convenient means of identifying themselves with the Third World.

* This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of National Estimates and coordinated with the Office of Current Intelligence.

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US Attitudes

2. For the West, however, and particularly for the US, the issue is exceedingly complex: a mixture of interests in both black and white-ruled Africa, strong moral pressures from domestic religious and humanitarian groups, conflicting interests in the United Nations and other world organizations, and uncertainties over how the southern African situation affects larger Great Power relations in the world.

3. US attitudes toward southern Africa in the past decade have been greatly complicated in at least three ways. For one thing, the coming of independence to black Africa coincided with the flowering of the civil rights movement in this country and with parallel expressions of concern elsewhere in the West over basic human rights. Both the US civil rights struggle and the black African emergence from colonial rule involved similar basic challenges of rapidly educating and training great numbers of blacks. For the blacks in both the US and Africa, the decade of the 1960's also brought a quest for new symbols of black identity, dignity, and purpose. In some cases American blacks sought inspiration from the political awakening of black Africa, and paid more heed to their African cultural heritage. The impact of all this on

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Western, and particularly US, attitudes has been primarily to direct more attention to Africa, and secondarily to emphasize, in press coverage at any rate, the more favorable and optimistic developments in black Africa. As a corollary, criticism of white southern Africans became more fashionable.

4. A second complication in Western attitudes was the tendency to apply to black Africa most of the assumptions and criteria which had served well in other areas of the world which had earlier gained independence. Even though most Western observers recognized at the start that the new African states were deficient in political experience, institutions, economic infrastructure, and trained manpower, there was a strong predilection to treat such disabilities as temporary and susceptible to cure by orthodox approaches and programs. By and large Africans themselves tended to underestimate their backwardness, and overestimate their prospects for development. Gradually over the last decade, the initial optimism has faded, and the intractability of many black African problems is more clearly recognized. Few Africanists now look for rapid economic development in black Africa, or expect that Africa will exert much influence upon the world scene in the next decade.

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5. A third complication was the fear that Communist powers would gain influence in the new African states at the expense of the West. Indeed, in the early 1960's the Soviets and Chinese showed considerable interest in black Africa. Their willingness to back the Congolese rebels and their support for left-leaning African regimes in Ghana, Zanzibar, Congo (Brazzaville) and Guinea were matters of concern. It was widely believed that the Communists and their African friends, if successful in displacing tottering pro-Western regimes, would eventually be able to deny to the West access to important African minerals, to say nothing of overflight and landing rights, and would imperil sea and air communications between the Western Hemisphere and the Indian Ocean-South Asia area.

6. Early Communist successes in black Africa proved illusory, however. The influence of China receded after 1965, partly because of its preoccupation with the Cultural Revolution, and partly because aggressive Chinese words and actions repelled a good many important Africans. The Russians also encountered unexpected difficulties in their African programs. Their clients in Ghana and Mali were overturned, with accompanying loss of Soviet prestige. The efforts at ideological

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indoctrination of Africans made only slow progress, and expensive aid programs yielded sparse returns in terms of building influence. In 1970 the Communist powers have little to show for their efforts. Except in Tanzania, Zambia, Guinea, Congo (Brazzaville), Somalia, and perhaps Nigeria, the Communist powers seem less disposed than earlier to compete with the West for influence, or to take on additional political risks or economic commitments.

7. As Cold War competition for influence in black Africa has waned, Africa appears to be less important to the US. For example, the recent proclamation in Brazzaville of a "Peoples' Republic of the Congo", with Marxism-Leninism as its official creed, and a hammer and sickle (or hoe) on a red background its national flag, hardly raised an eyebrow in western capitals, and drew only scant applause from the Communist world. In more important African states, Communist initiatives, i.e., Soviet military aid to Nigeria or Chinese railway building in Tanzania and Zambia, are still matters of concern to the US. But, by and large, US attitudes towards Africa are tending to revolve around specific interests at stake in each crisis or changing situation. In the case of southern Africa, it is of some importance to assess the changing attitudes of black Africans, and what they expect of the US.

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Black Africa looks South

8. The decade of the 1960's began in black Africa with a flurry of instant independence. In the prevailing euphoria, most black Africans who were politically aware, together with many westerners, viewed the total liberation of Africa from white control as inevitable, perhaps imminent. There were ample grounds for such belief in the early 1960's. The outbreak of black insurgencies in Angola and Mozambique seemed to herald the end of Portugal's anachronistic empire. The stubborn refusal of a white minority in Rhodesia to yield or even to share political power with the blacks appeared merely a procrastinating ploy. White farmers in Kenya had at first balked at the prospect of black power, but yielded more or less gracefully. Many thought the Rhodesians would do the same. Even in the bastion of apartheid, white South Africans were shaken by the massacre of blacks at Sharpeville and fearful of further bloody clashes.

9. Southern Africa in 1970 is much different from what most black Africans had thought or hoped it would be. The insurgent movements in Angola and Mozambique are bogged down and no longer pose a very serious threat. White Rhodesians, more defiant than ever, are surviving international

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opprobrium and withstanding economic sanctions. Indeed Rhodesian economic performance in 1969 far surpassed that of the black African states. South Africa has grown stronger and wealthier, and its harsh system of racial discrimination is more firmly enshrined than ever.

10. Black Africans are particularly frustrated by their inability to effect change in white-ruled Africa through their numerical strength in the UN. For a while, black African resolutions, with the overwhelming support of both Communist and Free World delegations, seemed to be striking at vulnerable spots, e.g., banning arms sales to South Africa, depriving South Africa of its mandate over South West Africa, and establishing economic sanctions against Rhodesia. But when it became clear to black Africans that these measures served only to stiffen white African resistance to change, the blacks turned to tougher proposals: the ousting of Portugal and South Africa from world organizations and gatherings; economic sanctions backed by force against all of southern Africa; and the forcible expulsion of South African administrators from South West Africa. In advocating such extreme measures, they are losing the backing of the US and some other Western countries and, indeed, are setting the stage for difficult UN sessions.

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11. Oddly enough, though African solidarity and militancy prevail in the halls of the UN, there is much less evidence of either continental unity or firm resolution at home. Virtually all African leaders still pay lip service to the liberation of their brothers in southern Africa, particularly in gatherings with other African leaders. It is a matter of honor, costs nothing, and is one of the few issues on which Africans can agree. But nearly everywhere pan-African concepts, including liberation of southern blacks, are fading fast, and the overriding concerns of African governments are those of sheer political survival, the accommodation of divergent domestic pressure groups, and the effort to cope with massive economic problems. The African press and radio are similarly concerned with local or national issues. Nor are students and youth normally much exercised about southern African racial matters. An indication of the declining interest in southern African liberation is the withering of contributions from black states to the African Liberation Committee of the OAU*.

* The African Liberation Committee was established in 1963 to channel funds to the liberation movements, mainly in southern Africa. Its budget for 1969-70 is set at \$1.9 million. The same budget for the previous year fell short by some \$1.3 million, because only 5 states paid their full assessments, and 20 paid nothing at all.

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12. At this stage, black African attitudes toward white southern Africa cover a broad spectrum. Malawi is the only black state to maintain diplomatic relations with South Africa, but a few others are leaning towards closer relations. Rulers of the Ivory Coast, Gabon, and Madagascar speak privately of South Africa both as a possible source of aid and as a bulwark against the spread of Communism in Africa. Amid some controversy Prime Minister Busia of Ghana in a press conference tossed out a suggestion about starting a dialogue with white South Africans. These and other states in black Africa maintain an unpublicized trade with southern Africa. The majority of African rulers say little about the liberation issue, probably because they rarely think about it.

13. In black Africa only Zambia, Tanzania, and Guinea still take a consistently militant stance. Even in these countries, the fervor for the liberation cause is largely confined to the rulers and a handful of the elite. Presidents Nyerere of Tanzania and Kaunda of Zambia are committed in theory to the advent of black rule in southern Africa. In practice, their enthusiasm for the liberation movements is frequently dampened by the erratic behavior and chronic bickering of the exiles based in their countries. If either

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ruler were displaced, there is no assurance that a successor would continue to support black insurgents. By the same token, the removal of African rulers now leaning towards South Africa could bring abrupt changes in foreign policy.

14. Black Africans generally appear resigned to their own inability to alter the southern African situation, and they no longer expect much help from the former metropolises, i.e., the UK and France. The inability of Whitehall to deal effectively with Rhodesia has confirmed the suspicions of many Africans about the growing impotence of UK foreign policy. The French are regarded somewhat differently, partly because they make some greater pretense toward retaining Great Power status in Africa. Kaunda at one time charged France with aiding the cause of apartheid but, after a ceremonial visit to Paris, declared that the French were doing what they thought was right. France is still able to wield considerable political influence over most of its former colonies, and to sell arms to South Africa without incurring much criticism. De Gaulle's successors, like de Gaulle himself, have made it plain to their African clients that French policy is designed to further French national interests, and that African

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complaints are neither welcomed nor heeded. Consequently, francophone Africans generally protect their patron from censure in international gatherings.

15. On the other hand, many Africans see the US as virtually omnipotent in military and financial resources, and still look to the US to set things right in southern Africa. Some African leaders believe that if only they can discover an effective approach, the US can be persuaded to bring to bear the necessary diplomatic, economic and military pressure to force political change in favor of the blacks in southern Africa. Yet these hopes seem to be waning. Gradually, an increasing number of Africans are coming to believe that US interests, like those of France, are not necessarily tied to African liberation.

White Southern Africans look Outward

16. The white regimes have gained increased confidence in their own ability to protect their privileged status from domestic and foreign foes. South African Prime Minister Vorster is attempting to shift from traditional isolation to an "Outward Policy" of seeking better relations with the outside

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world, particularly with independent black Africa. He hopes to diffuse African hostility towards the white regimes, build a better image in the West, and thwart what he sees as Communist machinations in black Africa. The Outward Policy so far has not gone much further than Malawi in black Africa, where South Africa maintains diplomatic relations and furnishes economic and technical aid. Portugal and Rhodesia are also trying to woo a few African regimes, i.e., Madagascar, Congo (Kinshasa), mainly by trade proposals.

17. The white regimes have come to ignore the barrage of condemnations from the UN. Vorster has made it very clear that South Africa will not budge on apartheid, nor will it yield control over South West Africa no matter what external pressures are applied. South Africans are no longer as apprehensive as they were a few years ago about the possible imposition of economic sanctions by the UN Security Council, in part because they believe that the UK would veto it, and in part because they have rapidly built up their own industry, including armaments. Lisbon is no more flexible or responsive to external pressures than is Pretoria, and is not likely to be moved by UN appeals or demands for changes in Angola and Mozambique.

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18. All of the white southern African regimes would prefer to improve their relations with the West and especially with the US, if it can be done without yielding on any internal racial arrangements. White South Africans, in particular, would like to be recognized and appreciated by the Western world. They are proud of their culture, especially their medical, scientific, and sports heroes, and are still smarting from the humiliation of being banned from the 1968 Olympic Games. Nevertheless, they recently refused a visa to Arthur Ashe, who is a Negro as well as one of America's best tennis players. This is likely to lead to the expulsion of South Africa from Davis Cup competition and other measures which would further estrange South Africa from the West. The denial of the visa was based in part on the applicant's earlier strong statements on South African racial practices, but primarily because the government, facing a general election, feared giving an impression of softness on racial policy.

19. Despite current hassles with the West over racial matters, Vorster and a good many other South Africans lay stress on the strategic importance of their country to the West, particularly with the Suez Canal closed. They expect

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that the Western European countries which import oil from the Persian Gulf will become more aware of the advantages in establishing more friendly relations with South Africa. In particular they are hoping for a shift in attitude on the banning of arms to South Africa. Though the French are willing to sell virtually any item of armament or military equipment, the South African military would prefer certain types of more sophisticated equipment made in the US and the UK.

20. South Africans are worried about the small, but persistent Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean, yet they have hopes of using this factor to their advantage. They believe that common US and South African security interests may lead to some sort of collaboration in the monitoring or surveillance of the Soviet vessels. They hope that the US will increase its naval presence in the area in view of Soviet activities and will make greater use of South African ports. In these circumstances, Vorster would go some distance to soften local racial regulations to accommodate US practices. He would probably expect, in return, some easing of US pressure on South Africa on such issues as apartheid and South West Africa.

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21. Most white southern Africans seem to expect a gradual improvement in their relations with the West over the next few years. They profess to see in Western capitals a perceptible trend in their favor, because of some of the considerations listed above, and because they think that many westerners are disillusioned about political stability in black Africa. Southern Africans believe that the UN will be of less importance in the formulation of policy in the West, and therefore, that the Western powers will be less concerned with garnering black African votes. The southern Africans are also relying heavily on their own abilities to maintain domestically both racial calm and buoyant economies, and thereby offer an attractive field for investors.

US Interests in Black and White Africa

22. Black Africa still matters to the US, even though earlier expectations of economic development and movement toward Western political models are now pretty well dashed. The 40-odd African votes in the UN General Assembly often loom large in such issues as the Chinese representation, the Middle East, Nuclear Proliferation agreements, and the Seabeds issue. The voting strength of Africans in the UN

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could damage US interests if the bulk of the Africans were to side consistently with our foes. There are still a few physical installations and arrangements in black Africa of some significance to US security. [REDACTED]

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overflight privileges in a number of other black countries are valuable assets.

23. On balance though, US military and security interests appear to be considerably greater in southern Africa. US installations there include a US Air Force missile tracking station; a NASA deep space tracking station, deemed of prime importance for future US programs; and landing rights in South Africa. Though it is current practice for US naval vessels not to put in at South African ports, the refueling and repair facilities there are the best in Africa.

24. In considering US economic interests in black and white Africa, the balance again seems to lie with the southern white area. South Africa alone buys more from the US than does all of black Africa. Moreover, the balance of trade with South Africa is highly favorable to the US. US direct investment in South Africa (\$667 million in 1968) is nearly

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as much as in the whole of black Africa. In addition, South African gold (75 percent of the Free World production) is still important in international monetary matters. Rhodesia, before the imposition of economic sanctions, was an important source of chromium, and the sole source of lithium for US industry. New discoveries of nickel in Rhodesia may be of some interest to the US, and Gulf Oil is bringing in some new petroleum fields in Angola.

25. Black Africa's minerals are significant, and so is US investment there. US companies are actively exploiting Nigerian oil, Guinean bauxite, Liberian iron ore, and Zambian copper. There are also a few exotic, strategically important minerals, e.g., beryllium, cobalt, and columbium mined in black Africa. A denial of these could, in time, cause the US some awkward problems. Yet, we doubt that any US action or lack of action in southern Africa would greatly damage these interests. If US investments in Africa are disrupted it will be largely because Africans, by their own choice and for their own reasons, (pride, frustration, desire for a greater share of profits), take action against foreign interests.

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26. In sum, from a global perspective, US interests in both black and white Africa are minor. In a material sense, those in southern Africa probably outweigh those in black Africa. Southern Africa offers a more attractive climate for trade and investment, black Africa has more UN votes.

27. There are, however, some potential constraints on US policy in southern Africa. US pronouncements endorsing racial equality and condemning apartheid are explicit and widely acclaimed in much of the world. Any major shift in policy that appeared contrary to these principles would arouse the indignation of a fairly large and highly articulate segment of domestic public opinion, and could adversely affect the US image abroad. The retention of the US consulate in Rhodesia after that country becomes a republic might not attract much attention at home or abroad, but an announcement of a US carrier visit to a South African port would probably be interpreted as a softening of US opposition to South African racial policies. Domestic pressures on southern African policy would be much more formidable in the next few years if blacks, militants of the New Left, students, or others now absorbed in domestic and anti-war issues were to take up actively the cause of oppressed blacks in southern Africa.

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It is not now a popular cause in the US and may never become one, but we would not altogether rule it out.

28. Over a longer period, say a decade or two, US relations with black and white African states are likely to be caught up in the larger framework of the rich world vs. the poor world. Barring a major war or other unforeseeable disaster, the gulf between the wealthy nations of the world -- those of North America, Europe, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the USSR, and possibly South Africa -- and the poor ones will almost certainly be much wider. Most of US trade and investment, as well as cultural, scientific, and technological relations will probably be with the rich countries. Obviously, not all countries will be clearly in one category or the other, but it is likely that virtually all of black Africa will be in the poor world, grappling with problems arising from rapid population growth and insufficient resources. In such a context, the moral dilemma of the US will be much greater, as the poor, non-white countries clamor for aid and attention. Beyond that, it is difficult to estimate what US concerns and responsibilities in Africa will be.

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29. Meanwhile, whatever actions the US chooses to adopt in southern Africa are not likely to affect either southern white determination to preserve internal racial discrimination or black African disposition to have little to do with white southern Africans. If the US were to move toward closer relations with Southern Africa, we doubt that many black African leaders would be much upset. Most of French-speaking Africa has long been indifferent to the whole southern African situation, and would not take much notice. A few East African rulers would denounce the US verbally and there would be some demonstrations. Some radical regimes (Guinea, Congo (Brazzaville), Tanzania), and probably Zambia and Somalia would condemn the US more shrilly. A few might harass or expel some US citizens, and make life more difficult for US businessmen and others. Some of these regimes are already in an anti-foreign or anti-US mood and are likely to remain so, no matter what steps the US takes in southern Africa.

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30. It is possible, of course, that if the US were to be more accommodating to southern Africa, black Africans might seek solace in closer association with the Communists, thus leading to a more polarized Africa in which US-supported white minority regimes in the south were arrayed against Communist-backed blacks to the north. This would presuppose a much greater willingness to coalesce on the part of both the black states and the Communist powers than they have shown heretofore. Many, perhaps most, African rulers are highly suspicious of foreign Communists. They welcome Communist aid, but are wary of political ties or attempts to exert influence. Even in African states where the Communist presence is strong, the rulers are hypersensitive to encroachments in political and cultural matters. Furthermore, in recent years, the Soviets in particular have taken a fairly cautious approach to Africa even where new opportunities are presented. We think therefore, that a polarization as portrayed above is only a very remote possibility. Africans are far too dependent upon the West for trade and aid to throw away Western connections, particularly over an issue as tangential to their domestic interests as the southern African situation.

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31. It is more likely that the Communists would seek to publicize as widely as possible in the Third World any evidence of warmer relations between the US and southern Africa. They might also step up their aid to the black liberation movements, and use the issue to gain some advantages in Zambia and Tanzania. We doubt that either the USSR or Communist China would be interested in any greater direct involvement in the insurgency movements or that either country would make major new military commitments to the black countries bordering on white southern Africa.

32. Nationalistic feeling within the new black African states, though still embryonic, is virtually certain to become a determining factor in the next decade in limiting external influence from West or East. A strong trend is already setting in towards greater suspicion of all foreigners, no matter how well-intentioned their efforts to help Africans. As Africans become more touchy and difficult either to aid or influence, the external powers, East and West, will be re-examining their own interests and goals in Africa.

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